The Highlander

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INSIDE: AUTHOR LEARNS TO LOVE HUSBAND AGAIN IN MEMOIR PAGE 11 **FREE**

Former dean speaks out

Barb Bolin was the face of HSAD for 36 years. She is concerned Fleming College isn't talking to the community.
Photo by Lisa Gervais.

Fleming brass under fire for freezing out community

By Lisa Gervais

Former dean of Haliburton School of Art + Design (HSAD), Barb Bolin, and Dysart et al mayor, Murray Fearrey, say they are both concerned about the future of the college after the termination of dean Xavier Masse.

Peterborough-based Fleming College, of which HSAD, Peterborough and Lindsay campuses are a part, confirmed last week that Masse was no longer with the college.

Masse declined to comment and the college said "out of respect for employee privacy, the college will not be sharing additional personal details."

The Highlander this week requested an interview with interim college president, Dr. Theresa Knott, and board of governors' chair, Don Gillespie. However, the college told us, "unfortunately, Dr. Knott and Mr. Gillespie are not available for interviews at the moment."

They issued a statement instead that said: "Fleming College remains committed to the long-term sustainability of its campuses, including the Haliburton School of Art + Design, and the delivery of quality education. The college has made the difficult decision to eliminate the senior executive lead at the campus and invest in programming that is student-focused and community-centred. The operations of the campus will not be disrupted, and HSAD is planning for exciting spring and summer sessions.

"HSAD will continue to offer unique and flexible programs taught by creative professionals in a one-of-a-kind studio environment, and the Haliburton campus remains an important part of Fleming College's academic and community presence."

Highlander questions, such as how Fleming plans to ensure the long-term stability of HSAD; or how operations would not be disrupted with a key position eliminated, remain unanswered.

According to the Sunshine list, Masse was paid $164,163 in 2024.

Continued **'Public'** on page 2

Highlander news

Public has yet to see inside new residence

Continued from page 1

Surprise announcement

It appears the decision to eliminate the dean position came as a surprise to the college and community.

Bolin said it's well-known Ontario colleges have been struggling financially since the federal government capped the number of foreign students starting January 2024.

The Haliburton campus was the only Fleming-operated site to escape widespread program cuts after the limits were imposed. Twenty-nine programs in Peterborough and Lindsay were scrapped, with then Fleming president Maureen Adamson estimating the cap would mean a $40 million annual revenue loss for the college. At its peak, the institution reported 4,000 of a total 7,200 students were international. Last March, a college spokesperson said the impact in Haliburton has been negligible but warned changes could be on the horizon.

Bolin understands that but wishes the Peterborough head office would have talked to the community. She said the Haliburton campus exists because of support from community organizations, politicians, and individuals.

"So, I'm surprised and disappointed that the leadership at the college has not reached out to any of them to talk about ways of making the campus here more viable. The community here is interested in what's going on with the campus leadership, and programming, but there has, to my knowledge, been no effort by the college leadership to reach out to us."

Fearrey said he's had little success meeting with college leadership to discuss its long-term future, other than advising Masse "you've got to diversify here. You can't just do art. If you do other things … get some revenue in." He said Bolin were successful at doing that during her tenure.

The mayor said it's discouraging "because I want to know what the future is. What are we doing here? They're closing colleges around us."

The dean position, most recently held by Xavier Masse, pictured, has been eliminated at the college. *Photo by Lisa Gervais.*

No one on board

Bolin said there is no board of governors representative in Haliburton that she knows of. She said she recommended a local for a board position years ago; the person applied but received no response.

"I'm very concerned that there's not a board of governor rep up here. But we have had lots of past board members who are very active in the County and could give feedback to the board, and leadership of the college, about concerns."

As for no longer having a dean, Bolin added, "long-term leadership is so important so that the person can deal with campus issues, and community issues. That's part of the whole thing with community colleges."

Commenting on the college's stance that operations will not be disrupted, Bolin said "I don't know how existing staff would have time to do all of that (work).

"I'm very concerned about what the direction of the campus is, and how the campus is going to be promoted, and specifically how the campus is going to be led in any direction."

Further speaking to a disconnect between the college and community, she said Fleming had not even offered tours of its new student residence in Haliburton. There was never a grand opening either. Dysart et al donated land for the build.

"It does feel disrespectful to me…to the community…to not be in touch with the community to tell us the direction, ask for input, talk to us about where they see the campus going," Bolin reiterated.

Provincial funding

On Feb. 12, the province announced changes for post-secondary education in the fall, including $6.4 billion in new funding for the sector over four years, touted as a 30 per cent increase, including to help meet the needs of rural institutes.

There is an updated tuition framework. Ontario will allow publicly-assisted colleges and universities to raise tuition by up to two per cent per year for three years, then up to two per cent or the three-year average rate of inflation, whichever is less, after that.

There will also be alterations to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) system. Ontario students will be eligible to receive a maximum of 25 per cent of their OSAP funding as grants and a minimum of 75 per cent of their funding as loans. OSAP will no longer offer grants to students at private career colleges, in alignment with changes made by the federal government to its own student support funding.

It is not known what impact any of this will have on HSAD.

Bolin said "once you divide it among all the colleges and all the universities, I don't know that it's a huge impact, and does it have strings attached to it? I don't know." There are 56 post-secondary schools in Ontario.

The college said Feb. 12 it welcomed the news. "This generational investment is exciting news for Fleming College and the students and communities we serve. The college is grateful for the province's commitment and looks forward to reviewing its allocation details."

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Nimigons buy Bernstein's General Store

By Mike Baker

Haliburton entrepreneur Brandon Nimigon said he feels the weight of 100 years of history after purchasing one of the Highlands' most iconic destinations, Bernstein's General Store.

The realtor closed a deal for the Highland Street location Feb. 20. It comes almost a year after Heidi Grant, the fourth generation of Bernstein to run the store, confirmed it would be closing.

It's been months since the doors closed, with Grant posting on social media in February 2025 that the business had fallen on hard times. The property was listed in mid-January by Donna McCallum of Ball Real Estate on behalf of the estate of Marty and Randy Grant – Heidi's father and uncle.

As chair of the Haliburton BIA, Nimigon said he'd been keeping tabs on what was happening with Bernstein's for months. Once it was listed, he registered his interest that day. Owner of Century 21 Granite Realty, Nimigon confirmed he'll be moving his business into one of three commercial spaces he has planned for the old Bernstein's property.

"The whole building is going to be a full redo. We want to restore the building to what it used to be – just a beautiful staple of downtown Haliburton," Nimigon said of the 3,600 sq. ft. space.

He expects renovations to the main floor to run through spring, with the idea of having two new businesses open for summer. There are two apartments upstairs – a two-bed and four-bed, which Nimigon said also need to be redone.

Having grown up in Haliburton, Nimigon said he has great memories of visiting the store when he was a kid and has heard many stories from when Bella Bernstein, its founder, and Betty and Ron Grant, the second generation, ran it.

"Bernstein's used to be the central hub of the community… just the history the family built there. These past few years you could see the decline of it, which is unfortunate," Nimigon said. "We're going to try and respect the history the Bernsteins built there. We have some ideas on how to do that.

"The store has been closed for the past year, so it's going to take some work to bring it up to date. I'm really excited about the potential – not just for the store, but for the community. Bringing some new commercial spaces there is really going to revive that section of the downtown," he added.

As well as interior work, Nimigon is planning upgrades to the exterior façade. That should help rectify the long-talked-about pigeon problem in the downtown, with Nimigon saying the birds made their nests in the attic at Bernstein's.

After also recently purchasing a building in downtown Minden, Nimigon said he's passionate about investing in his home community. He and his wife, Megan, had been looking to buy in Haliburton's downtown for several years, he noted.

"When I was a kid, all my friends growing up had this mindset of 'let's get the heck out of this town.' There was this perception that there's no money here, lots of storefronts were vacant, but that's really changed these past 10-15 years. I want to be part of that change," Nimigon said.

"I want to do my part to help both Haliburton and Minden grow. Taking on a project like this can change the whole feel of the downtown… I want a place where my kids can grow up and be proud of where they're from. I want them to love Haliburton County and want to stay here, rather than counting down the days until they can leave."

Years of history

Originally a general store that sold meats, cheeses and other groceries, Bernstein's has been a staple of Haliburton's downtown since 1923. Grant said it transitioned to a clothing store in the 1950s, after Dollo's IGA opened.

Grant said she has fond memories of her grandparents running the store. Born in Toronto, Grant said she moved back to Haliburton when she was two so that her dad could help Betty and Ron run the place.

"He wanted me to grow up with family, as well as this amazing community," Grant said in her social media post. "Any days that Bernstein's was open, my grandma would make dinner for the family. We would all sit around the dinner table… eating, laughing, sharing memories and making new memories."

After her grandparents passed away, Grant said her dad and uncle took on the business. They kept it going for many years, though with Randy passing in 2021 and Marty in 2024, the burden fell to Heidi.

Brandon Nimigon and his wife, Megan, have purchased Bernstein's General Store. Pictured with their children Ellie and Bennett. *Photo submitted.*

"I have tried my hardest to do everything possible to save Bernstein's and keep it open… it still doesn't feel real," she said last year after announcing its closure.

Nimigon said most of the remaining stock has been removed, but there were some clothing items and shoes left behind. He plans to sell what's left at a reduced rate and donate the proceeds back into the community.

"Whether it's the local food bank or another charity, we'll be doing something for sure," Nimigon said.

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School's not cool as program cancelled

By Lisa Gervais

Rayson Kelly graduated from Schools Cool in Minden in 2024. *File.*

Breana Kelly's son, Rayson, graduated from SIRCH's School's Cool program in 2024, while her daughter, Rue, received the cap and gown in 2025.

Kelly said she was "devastated" to learn SIRCH is this year cancelling the six-week summer program that prepares children for kindergarten.

She said her nephew is starting school in September and she would have liked him to have been exposed to the program.

"I obviously saw major benefits with both my children in that program, so I was hoping that he would get to go because I do believe it makes or breaks the transition from either home or daycare to kindergarten. I think it just really sets them off on the right foot, and sets them up for success."

Kelly said her children have varying personalities, so got different things from School's Cool. There was literacy and math, but to her it was the emotional foundation and predictability around going to school that stood out.

"Kids thrive on routine." She said their program was at Archie Stouffer in Minden, where Rayson and Rue now go, so they learned how to get to class and know the actual classroom. School's Cool "set the foundation for what school was going to look like."

She added the kids made friends with others starting in September. They knew the routines of lunch and recess. With Rayson being born in 2020, and thus a COVID baby, it was especially important. It also eased Kelly's mind as she had not attended ASES herself.

Lack of funding

SIRCH said last week it's shelving the program for 2026 due to a lack of funding.

Marketing manager Laurie McCaig said School's Cool had been going for 25 years, with hundreds of children in Haliburton County entering kindergarten with language and math skills at grade level, and with confidence.

SIRCH executive director Gena Robertson said for many years, funding for School's Cool was partially funded by the federal Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) grant. Robertson said SIRCH had to reapply for CAPC funding for a further four-year term starting in 2026, and the funding was improved but it no longer covered early learning.

Robertson said finding funding for the charitable organization's out-of-the-box programs, services, resources and social enterprises, is always a challenge.

She said they hope to bring School's Cool back for the summer of 2027. Asked how they would pay for it, Robertson conceded "that's a good question." However, she said they would look for alternative sources of funding. She added they would be interested in talking with any County businesses or corporations that might be interested in sponsoring School's Cool. Asked for an estimate of costs for the six-week program, she said $30,000.

SIRCH does charge parents a fee of $120. Robertson said they recognize families are struggling in the current economy and SIRCH does not want to raise that. SIRCH has operated the program virtually in the past, but Robertson said that is not the preferred option. She said while parents are educated to help their children with early academic learning, the kids do not get the socializing that is key to getting them ready for kindergarten.

Kelly hopes they can bring it back. She said Rayson and Rue still talk about School's Cool "so obviously it was a great experience for them."

ALGONQUIN HIGHLANDS NEWS

Potential lift off

Algonquin Highlands' parks, recreation and trails manager, Chris Card, says he's found another potential funding stream to help pay for a stairlift at the Stanhope Firefighters' Community Hall.

He told council Feb. 19 that the project qualifies for the RBC Barrier Buster grants program, which will provide $40,000 each to 40 organizations this year to improve accessibility at public spaces. The program has been launched in honour of the 40th anniversary of Rick Hansen's Man in Motion World Tour.

"We feel the lift at the Stanhope hall is a perfect fit," Card said, noting the township was unsuccessful in its attempts to have the project funded through a provincial 'enhancing access to spaces for everyone' (EASE) grant last year. "It was denied due to it being an oversubscribed program."

Card estimates the lift will cost around $50,000, requiring the township to kick in $10,000 should they receive the RBC money. Council approved the ask.

He noted the County had also been in touch regarding renewal of seniors active living centre (SALC) programming. Last year, the township received money to put on fitness classes for seniors in Stanhope and Dorset.

"We're looking forward to seeing if more funding is available," Card said.

Gazebo design deferred

Council has held off making a final decision over the design for a new gazebo at the Dorset Heritage Museum, pending more feedback from the organization's volunteer committee.

The township's project manager, Brian Mulholland, brought two options to council last week, the first featuring a gable roof design for an estimated $32,000 and the second a shed roof design for $29,480. Council approved a 20ft by 12ft structure last July, to be used for hosting events and to provide an area for social networking and community engagement.

Glenn Diezel, of Diezel Woodworks and the Haliburton School of Art + Design, has been retained for construction. Work will be completed by college students, providing its timber framing program runs this spring. Diezel and his students assisted with the installation of the new gazebo at St. Stephen's cemetery last year.

Mulholland said it would be ideal to break ground in the spring for foundational work, while he told council he would report back on costs to install a hydro connection at the site. He expects the project to be wrapped by late summer.

Pay review

The township has budgeted $25,000 for a mandated pay equity and compensation review it must complete in 2026.

CAO Angie Bird said, as a public sector employer, Algonquin Highlands is legislated via the Pay Equity Act to complete a review every five years. The last one was done in 2021 by Gallagher Benefits Group. She recommended council sole source services through Gallagher again this year, given they've already completed necessary background work for the previous review.

Bird said she expects the final cost to be less than $25,000.

"We expect we are in-line, as we have been in the last number of years," Bird said. "Once we get the review, we'll be towards the end of the year so any fluctuation would have a minimal [impact on this year's budget]."

Council discussed partnering with other townships on the review to bring the price down. Bird said they're too late in the process to do that this year, but it could be an option in the future. Mayor Liz Danielsen said there has been talk of human resource consolidation at the County level as part of the service delivery review, suggesting this be brought for discussion at the upper tier. *(Algonquin Highlands news compiled by Mike Baker)*

Highlander news

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The Haliburton landfill gets cameras. *Photo of Mike Baker.*

DYSART ET AL NEWS

Smile, you're on camera

After Dysart et al's environmental manager requested $30,000 to increase security at three of the township's landfills following a series of recent break-ins, council this week agreed to spend up to $6,000 installing cameras at its Haliburton site.

Staffer Ashley Dembinski told elected officials Feb. 24 there have been frequent issues with people trespassing at the Haliburton, West Guilford and Kennisis Lake landfills in recent months.

"Haliburton and West Guilford are the worst, I'd say they're on par – almost nightly [break-ins]," Dembinski said after coun. Carm Sawyer asked how bad the issue was.

On Jan. 7, Dysart called the OPP after roads manager Dave Coulter found multiple people foraging at the Haliburton landfill after hours. Dembinski said one man was arrested and charged.

"Our Kennisis Lake site also has frequent trespassing. Individuals are dropping their waste off [at the gates after hours] and scavenging items, which goes against our environmental compliance approval," Dembinski said. "It's the same at West Guilford."

She said the $30,000 would be used to install two cameras at each of the locations. Mayor Murray Fearrey wasn't convinced it would be money well spent.

"How far do we have to go here... $30,000 is a lot of money if this isn't going to work anyway. I'm not sure I've ever really seen any of our security cameras work that well [as a deterrent]," Fearrey said.

Dembinski said she'd secured one quote from a local company to install four cameras – two at Haliburton and two at West Guilford – for $10,000, but council still felt that was too much.

Sawyer suggested choosing one landfill and, if the cameras are successful, expanding to other sites in the future. Fearrey felt that could be done at the Haliburton landfill for $5,000 to $6,000, which the rest of council signed off on.

Years in the making

Council finally signed off on its controversial official plan and zoning bylaw amendment, which will enable lakefront property owners to install certain structures close to the water.

Gazebos will be allowed within five metres of a waterfront, with sheds also permitted on lots with a topography greater than 15 per cent. Planning director Jeff Iles noted only one of the structures will be allowed per property.

"If a building is going to be located on a municipally-owned shore road allowance, owners will have to purchase that shore road allowance; they will be required to re-naturalize their shoreline… and enter into a site plan agreement," Iles said.

Each structure can be a maximum of 10 sq. metres, with waterfront amenities totalling 20 sq. metres – this includes pre-existing patios and decks.

After initially proposing saunas be allowed within five metres of the water, council opted not to change the current rules for those structures – they will need to be set back either 20 or 30 metres to be approved.

In a recorded vote, Fearrey, deputy mayor Walt McKechnie and councillors Sawyer, Tammy Donaldson and Barry Boice approved the change, with Nancy Wood-Roberts opposed. Pat Casey was absent due to a family emergency.

Fire stats

Fire chief Dan Chumbley said it's shaping up to be another busy year for his department.

"We are on par to run 500 calls again this year, unfortunately. We had 41 calls this January, compared to 40 last year," Chumbley said.

The bulk of the calls were medical assists (26) with the next highest vehicle collisions (six) and snowmobile accidents (four). There were three calls for smoke/general alarm and one hydro complaint. The department didn't respond to any fires last month.

The chief got approval to put out a request for proposal (RFP) to source a new fire truck next year, replacing a 20-year-old model in the fleet; while he was given permission to move a surplus 2006 Ford 550 for $18,000 in wholesale trade value.

"This was quite a nice surprise," Camelon said. *(Dysart et al news compiled by Mike Baker)*

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Health unit reports 'hard year'

By Mike Baker

Lakelands Public Health (LPH) medical officer of health, Dr. Thomas Piggott, says the recently-merged organization will seek feedback from the public and key community stakeholders this year to help form future goals and objectives region-wide.

Piggott noted the public-facing second phase of LPH's strategic planning process will begin in March and run through summer. The health unit will host focus group sessions, community town halls, targeted interviews and will launch a survey – all designed to shape the work at LPH, both short and long term.

"We will be using these methods as an opportunity to highlight the recent changes made and help people understand what LPH does," Piggott said. "We want to gather insights around our vision and mission, while gathering priorities to inform our strategic plan."

During the first phase, completed last year, consultant Arising Collective engaged with 198 staff members to gauge how they felt the merger had gone and what could be improved. Now into the second year of the union between Peterborough Public Health and the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge district health unit, Piggott acknowledged things haven't been as seamless as he'd like.

Jenn Harrington, representing Arising Collective, told the board at a Jan. 21 meeting that staff have faced some real challenges.

"There's a sense of erosion of trust in this journey, a concern the senior leadership team has not been functioning cohesively, about management capacity - the burden on them and making sure they have the resources needed to effectively support their team," Harrington said. "There was a desire for clearer communication clarifying the scope of authority and responsibilities, a desire for more authentic engagement and follow through, and challenges around the volume of change that's happening with this merger."

Lakelands Public Health chair Ron Black pictured with deputy medical officer of health Dr. Natalie Bocking at a recent meeting. *File.*

Dan Joyce, representing Kawartha Lakes on the board, expressed concern over the comments raised, though chair Ron Black said they were to be expected, with interviews taking place approximately six months into the merger.

"Change is hard for a lot of people. I think in any merger of this type, change management is always the biggest issue for the first little while," Black said.

Piggott added, "some of the challenges were hard for us to hear. I want to acknowledge it's been a hard year. But now, we need to figure out how we go forward and make this better."

Despite the concerns raised, Piggott said LPH has not had trouble retaining staff through the first year of the merger.

Dr. Hans Stelzer, a retired Peterborough physician and provincial appointee to the board, asked, given the region's problems with homelessness, addiction and mental health, how feedback from those groups would be generated given they're not likely to attend public meetings. Black said that work would be done in collaboration with partner organizations.

"We have a large geography, so we, as a board, need to feed those stakeholders in Haliburton, Coboconk, and Fenelon Falls to [Arising Collective] to make sure we're engaging with people in all of our areas," Black said.

Piggott said staff hope to present a strategic plan proposal to the board in late summer or early fall, with a view to adopting something by early 2027.

AROUND THE COUNTY NEWS

Student immunizations

Parents with kids in Grades 2 and 11 at schools in Haliburton County have six weeks to update their child's immunization records with Lakelands Public Health (LPH).

Under the Immunization of School Pupils Act, students must have current records or a valid exemption on file with their local health unit. Marianne Rock with LPH said students without up-to-date records may face school suspension beginning March 31.

Suspension notices will be sent to schools for delivery to students to take home to their parents beginning March 9.

"It's important for parents and guardians to report their child's immunization updates directly to LPH," Rock said. "Immunization information is not automatically shared by healthcare providers, so it is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure LPH is informed."

Under Ontario law, school-aged youth must be protected against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, whooping cough, measles, mumps, rubella and meningococcal disease unless they have a valid exemption. Children born after 2010 must also be vaccinated against chickenpox.

The Highlander asked for statistics on the number of County-based youth in danger of suspension, but the health unit did not respond.

Parents can access their child's immunization record through Immunization Connect Ontario. Rock said LPH offers immunization clinics for youth without a family doctor or local healthcare provider, by appointment only. For more information, visit lakelandsph.ca/immunization or call 1-866-888-4577.

School census

Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) is preparing for the launch of its 2026 student census, with surveys available on March 3.

Director of education, Wes Hahn, said this will be the board's third census since the Ontario government established data standards for the identification and monitoring of systemic racism.

"This initiative will gather important identity-based demographic information, aligning with the board's ongoing commitment to equity and inclusion for all," Hahn said. "The data collected is crucial for providing the school system with valuable information that will be used to enhance strategic planning, programming and services."

Hahn said the census is confidential and voluntary, but not anonymous. Individual responses and all personal student and family information is protected under the freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation, he said.

Parents and guardians with students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 can complete the survey on behalf of their children, with youth in Grades 7 to 12 having the opportunity to complete the census in class.

The census can be completed online at www.tldsb.ca/student-census. *(Around the County news compiled by Mike Baker)*

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College crickets

By Lisa Gervais

In the mid-1960s, a small group of Haliburton County creatives came up with the idea of starting an arts school in the Highlands.

At the time, it seemed a natural collaboration with the new Haliburton Highlands Guild of Fine Arts which was bringing artists together.

Folks such as Carole Finn, Ron McCaw, Karl Hanke, and Jan Augusteijn, among others, were at the forefront.

Around that time, Sir Sandford Fleming College was being formed and the then-named Haliburton School of the Arts was formalized and became an extension of Fleming in 1967. Locals thought of it as "the Banff of the east."

Barb Bolin spent 36 years at the helm, retiring in 2008. It was Bolin who convinced the provincial government to build a year-round campus in Haliburton. She spearheaded a $2.5 million fundraising contribution towards the campus on College Drive. The new building opened in 2004, replacing the Lakeview Centre on Hwy. 118, which had held classes for years. Prior to that, there were lessons at the high school and in people's homes.

We reached out to Bolin after we'd heard Fleming College had dismissed dean Xavier Masse, who had been with the college since 2023.

Funny, but that wasn't one of the many Fleming College news releases on their website. It wasn't until local media asked about Masse that Fleming was forced to issue a statement.

And what a statement it was.

"Fleming College remains committed to the long-term sustainability of its campuses, including the Haliburton School of Art + Design, and the delivery of quality education."

We asked their media gurus how they are going to do that. Crickets.

They told us they are getting rid of the dean position but would "invest in programming that is student-focused and community-centred."

We asked what they meant. Crickets.

They told us the operations of the campus will not be disrupted.

Really? Then who is going to pick up the work of the dean?

They then offered some platitudes and motherhood statements I won't bore you with. You can find them in our front-page news story.

We asked for interviews with interim president Dr. Theresa Knott and board of governors' chair Don Gillespie and were denied. We got the same statement repeated instead.

Bolin and Dysart et al mayor Murray Fearrey, both told us they feel the college leadership is freezing the community out. And, yet, it's the community that built this college in the first place. So, why won't they talk to our mayor, a former dean of 36 years, and *The Highlander* and other news media?

Some may say we are being harsh. After all, the college did commit to finishing the student residence at a time when it was reeling from the federal government decision to cap the number of foreign students. That announcement caused the cancellation of a number of programs in Peterborough and Lindsay. And, yes, they have a robust continuing education program. Our concern is for the certificate programs.

Further, a Feb. 12 funding announcement by the province on post-secondary education may make all of our concerns go away. But, right now, we have no way of knowing that.

The college needs to talk to the community. Not doing so is beyond concerning and frustrating. It's downright disrespectful.

We demand that college leadership in Peterborough come to Haliburton County and hold a public forum in the Great Hall - at the college this community helped to build - and answer community questions and concerns about HSAD and its future.

At the same time, it might want to offer the community tours of its new residence building, which has been housing students since the fall.

Respecting history

By Mike Baker

It was both sad and encouraging to hear that Bernstein's General Store in Haliburton village has new owners.

On one hand, we're losing a longtime linchpin of the community. Bernstein's has been a Haliburton institution for more than a century. It started out as a grocery store, selling meats, cheeses and other foods to folks from its opening in 1923 until Dollo's IGA came to town in the 1950s.

It pivoted from there, becoming a shop for the working man – any type of clothing, footwear or accessories required for those operating outdoors could be sourced at Bernstein's. Or so I've been told.

It's fair to say the business had fallen on hard times in recent years. The third generation to run the place – Marty and Randy Grant, sons of Betty and Ron and grandsons of founder Bella Bernstein – did what they could to keep the business afloat. When Randy passed in 2021 and Marty in 2024, the burden fell to Marty's daughter, Heidi. The store closed last spring, never to reopen.

That's why it's encouraging to hear the building finally has new owners – even more so that it's someone local taking it on. Brandon Nimigon and his wife, Megan, closed a deal to take over the space Feb. 20. They have plans to relocate their Century 21 real estate office there, while also creating two new commercial spaces.

Speaking with Nimigon last week, it's clear he has big plans for the place. He spoke about respecting the building's history and traditions – this is a place he grew up visiting whenever he'd come into town. He mentioned doing something with the iconic Bernstein's sign.

Without giving too much away, he seemed excited about the possibilities of bringing two fresh, new businesses to the downtown. He sees this as an opportunity to revitalize that stretch of Highland Street.

It's long overdue. The Bernstein's building has been deteriorating for years. We were told many of the pigeons causing trouble and creating a mess in the downtown have been nesting in the building's attic space. Nimigon has promised to clean that up.

There has been a renewed effort by many downtown merchants in recent years to revamp their spaces. Joel Finkelstein, owner of the old Molou Theatre space, gave that building a facelift last summer. Next door, BAO Beauty Clinic did a great job decorating before moving to the corner lot on Highland and Maple in 2024. More recently, the owners of Juna did a great job sprucing up their location. Erika Mozes and Josh Karam also took ownership of the old Lockside Trading Company space to create a permanent home for Delancey Sports.

I remember talking to outgoing mayor Murray Fearrey before the 2022 municipal election. He wanted to create a 30-year plan to attract investors willing to spruce up the downtown core. While nothing really came of that, outside of a $1.28 million rehabilitation of sidewalks on Highland Street planned for this summer, it's encouraging to see business owners take pride in the town's appearance.

Credit for Nimigon for stepping up to the plate here. He's not doing this out of the kindness of his heart – there's no doubt this is a good business opportunity for him – but I believe it when he says he does care about maintaining Bernstein's history. He understands what the place has meant to so many people over the years.

The transformation will begin this spring, with Nimigon hoping to have new tenants in place by summer. Whether it's a new restaurant, retail space or boutique store, it'll just be nice to see some fresh life breathed into the space.

Editorial opinion

LETTERS

Made the right choice

Dear editor,

On Feb. 14, I was concerned I was having a stroke. I called 911 for an ambulance. A fire crew arrived first.

I know Gary Mount from a friend of a friend, and from attending legion breakfasts with him. While Shiela Barnes did an expert job of interviewing, and assessing, me (I later found out she is a former nurse), Gary did an excellent job of putting me at ease and making sure I was comfortable. He got me water, noticed my water filter was running low, and offered to fill it for me. He even mopped my floor, saying they had dragged snow in.

As the paramedics were loading me into the ambulance, I jokingly told the fire crew "I don't suppose you guys can bring my car so I have a way home?" To my incredible surprise, Gary did exactly that.

Paramedics, Rebecca and Ben, were knowledgeable, compassionate and kind. Ben stayed with me in the back and made sure I was comfortable and stable.

At the hospital, Dr. Bishop was patient and thorough, sorting my complex medical history. Nurses, Eden, Heather and Elsie, were skilled, incredibly kind and compassionate. The next morning, Elsie made sure I was okay getting ready to go, and gave me a number to call for support at home.

I couldn't drive home because I was in pain, so called Highland Taxi. Barb helped me into the cab and loaded my walker. She then helped me out of the cab at my home. She made sure I was settled before she left.

It reinforced for me that I made the right choice moving to Wilberforce in 2020. The people here are incredibly kind, compassionate, respectful and helpful. My heartfelt thank you to everybody.

Vivien Mausz
Wilberforce

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Shirley Davison-Mark of Haliburton snapped this photo of a pileated woodpecker.

Gravel under-layer to protect against radon

Dear editor,

Re: Health Unit offering free radon test kits (*The Highlander*, Jan. 8).

I fully support the provision of free radon test kits to residents.

Haliburton County's geology means we face a high probability of dangerous radon gas in our homes. I am writing to propose an additional action be taken that will further benefit homeowners, builders and government.

When basements, crawl spaces and cement slab-floors are being built, it is essential that gravel be used as the under-layer.

This has been a Building code requirement since the '60s, however too often the sand and gravel mix that was excavated, is used as fill.

Unfortunately, in the event that radon remediation is required, sand underfilling significantly hampers radon extraction, and will increase the cost of remediation, or even prevent it. And in some courts, builders and municipalities are being held liable.

So, starting now, it's important that all new basement builds use gravel underfill per code.

And, I note, this is also in line with a January 2025 update to the code regarding required radon prevention elements.

Dave Freeman
Grace Lake

HUMANS OF HALIBURTON HIGHLANDS

North always pulled him back

By Susan Tromanhauser

The year 1967 marked Canada's centennial, but Bill Wagar remembers '67 as the year his family took possession of their Head Lake cottage near Norland. At 10, Wagar began enjoying family weekends fishing and waterskiing, but never imagined at 70 that Haliburton County would become his full-time home.

In his teens, Wagar worked at the family grocery store in Newcastle before heading off to McMaster University. With degree in hand, Wagar parlayed summer employment with Bell Canada into a full-time career. Originally working in installation and repair, Wagar was soon tapped to join management. He lived in a variety of areas in and around Toronto but "the north was always pulling him back."

Once retired, he knew he had to leave the city where "all the action is" and in 2021, made the decision to make a permanent move to Haliburton County. The family cottage, not being fully winterized, was ill-suited for year-round living, but Wagar and his partner soon found a home close to Carnarvon. Their Minden Hills property is a full acre backing onto woodlands. Many refer to the area as the 'Blairhampton Triangle' because getting lost taking a short cut between Hwy. 35 and CR21 is common; but plenty of deer and turkeys have no trouble finding their way to Wagar's backyard.

While having given up waterskiing years ago, Wagar still enjoys fishing and snowmobiling. He is currently planning a weekend trip with his snowmobiling buddies for north of Sudbury. When not outdoors, Wagar spends his time completing renovation projects on his partner's 'honey-do' list.

Wagar's only complaint about living in the Highlands is the speed people travel the local highways. He implores them to slow down and enjoy the flora and fauna. "We have beautiful views and wildlife, take your time and look around." He warns there are many times he has narrowly avoided collisions with deer, but credits obeying the speed limit as the reason for only experiencing near misses. Being in good health, Wagar is not worried he does not have a local doctor. When necessary, phone calls suffice, with only occasional trips to Pickering for a doctor visit.

The Wagars continues the family tradition of enjoying lake life at their Head Lake cottage. Wagar spends at least half of his time at the lake. His son, who lives in Toronto, makes the trip regularly, while his daughter in California makes more sporadic visits. Wagar's stepson lived with Wagar and his partner for some time, hoping to make Haliburton County his home. Unfortunately, he was unable to find appropriate housing in the area, forcing him to return to Oshawa.

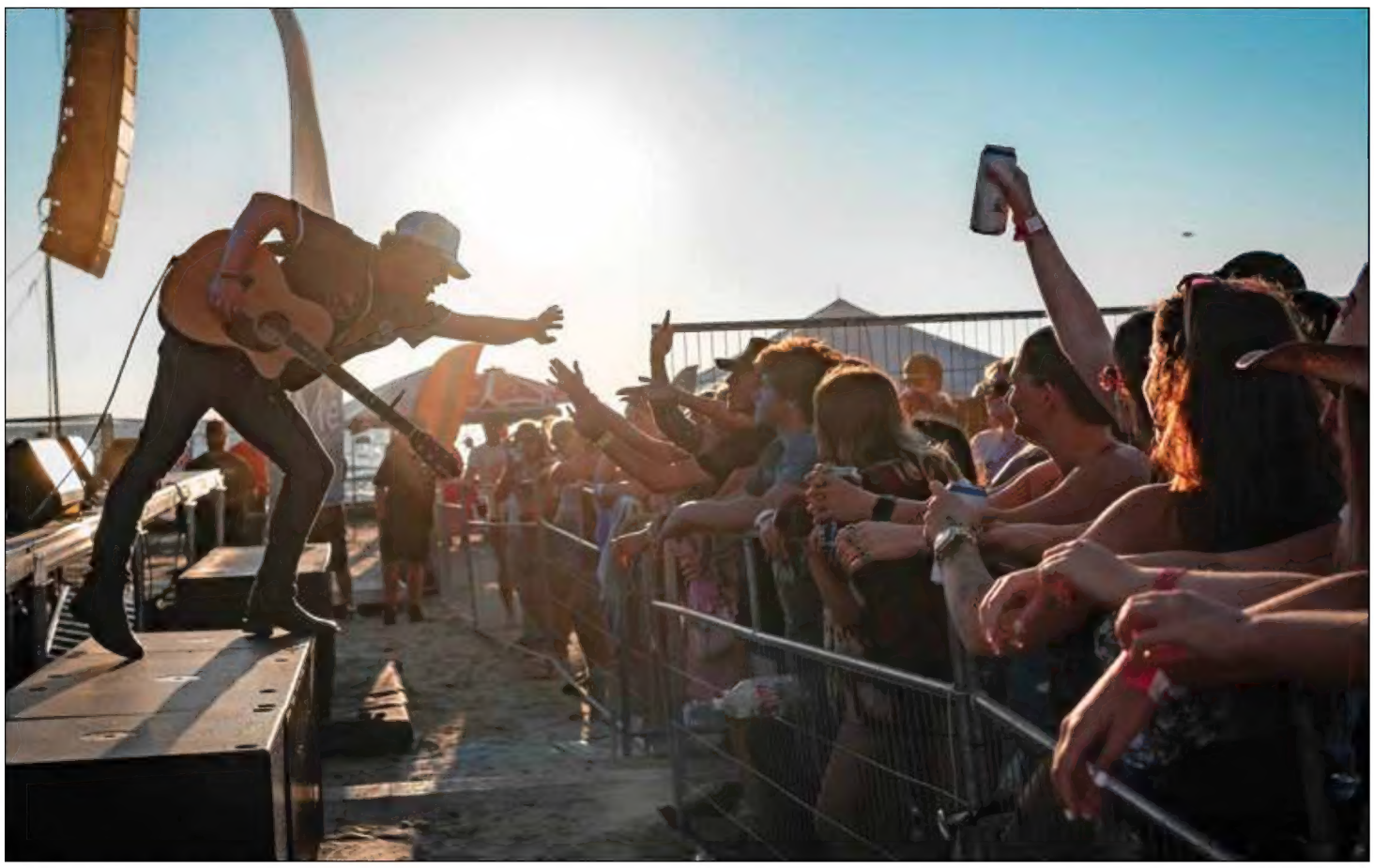
Approaching 60 years of coming to the cottage, Wagar is living his best life. He encourages others to slow down, not just while driving, to appreciate the area as much as he does. "We live in a beautiful area, take your time."

Bill Wagar. *Submitted.*

Highlander arts

Singer's new single goes downtown

By Mike Baker



The County's Ryan Van Lee has played venues across North America since launching his music career a decade ago. *Photo submitted.*

This is shaping up to be a big year for County musician Ryan Van Lee, who has a new single dropping next month, an Ontario-wide tour lined up for the summer and a debut EP in the works.

The country singer has forged a unique path in the music industry over the past decade. Starting out as a cover artist, singing songs made famous by other musicians, Van Lee has been focusing primarily on original content since the successful launch of his debut single, *Shot in the Dark*, in 2023

Since then, he's released three more songs he says are close to his heart – *Christmas With You* in 2024 and both *Company* and *Born to Fly* in 2025. The four songs were streamed more than 1.3 million times worldwide on Spotify last year.

"It's pretty surreal. Last time I checked, my songs had been played in 69 different countries around the world," Van Lee said. "Someone from Paris messaged me on Instagram recently just to say how much he loved my stuff. That was kind of an 'I made it' moment for me."

His latest effort, *Downtown* – a collaboration with Orillia-based rock band Bleeker – is coming out March 7. It's one of three singles Van Lee plans to release this calendar year. He said it tells the story of country boys heading down to the city to show folks how to party.

Having toured all over North America since graduating from Hal High, including popular venues in Florida and Nashville, as well as back home in Canada, Van Lee said he had no idea where the music industry would take him when he started out as kid.

While his chosen instrument is now the guitar, Van Lee started out on the accordion – an inherited love from his grandfather, Lawrence Van Lieshout.

"I was only seven or eight when I started to notice music. My opa was the only musician in the family… we'd play together at Midnight Madness in Haliburton and at old age homes in the area," Van Lee said. "Then I was entering talent contests and competing against adults – and actually doing really well."

His life changed when, at 14, his grandmother Sherry Blair took him to see Canadian Country Music Hall of Famer Johnny Burke. Blown away by the musician's talent, Van Lee said he asked Burke if he'd teach him how to play the guitar.

Initially, Van Lee met with Burke weekly, but that quickly morphed into jam sessions almost every other night. A quick learner, Van Lee told Burke he also wanted to learn how to sing with the best of them.

The first song he played was *Jambalaya* by Hank Williams, at a local talent show. From there, Van Lee started getting booked for small venues around central Ontario. He'd travel with Burke wherever the hall of famer was playing and would often by invited up on stage. A highlight reel memory was accompanying Burke for his 50th anniversary tribute show.

"They had Little Jim Dickens and George Jones calling in. Terry Sumsion was there with his tour bus, and I ended up sitting on the bus with Johnny, Terry and a couple other music legends just playing the guitar," Van Lee said. That led to a series of bookings on the country jamboree scene.

Years later, Van Lee reflects on that education fondly. After deciding to get into songwriting in the late 2010s, he said he could feel Burke's influence flowing through him with each completed piece. With a body of work now behind him, Van Lee said he expects to release his first album this year. He signed with Canada's CF Management last year to help navigate the next phase of his career.

"This is a bit of a make it or break it year, I'd say. I'm never going to quit until I get to where I want to go, but at this stage of my career this is a very important year," Van Lee said.

He'll be back in Haliburton this summer, scheduled to play at Rotary Summerfest Aug. 4. To listen to Van Lee's music, search his name on all streaming platforms.

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Mar 7 Gord Kidd
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Spa & WaterSpa Soothe your sore muscles in the WaterSpa or have a relaxing Spa Therapy session with us. Visit the Spa page of www.sirsamsinn.com for details or to book.

Dip n Dine Package Sunday through Thursday, add our relaxing WaterSpa experience for two for just $15 more when you make a dinner reservation!

Prime Rib Monday! Settle into our lakeview dining room for slow-roasted perfection with Yorkshire pudding, au jus, and your choice of potato and salad.

Fish Fryday Join us Fridays and enjoy Halibut and Chips for $28.95 OR Pan Seared Pickerel or Salmon with your choice of potato $38, both include salad and are plus tax.

CALL FOR QUESTIONS OR RESERVATIONS 705 754 2188

Learning to love husband again in memoir

By Lisa Gervais

Fay Martin has written *Dementia Widow,* which will be unveiled at a book launch March 6. *Photo by Lisa Gervais.*

Minden Hills author Fay Martin writes to figure out what she is thinking.

The creator of the soon-to-be released *Dementia Widow* is asked if penning her memoir was therapeutic in the aftermath of her husband Michael's death in 2020.

"Writing it was very therapeutic. I learned to love him again through writing it because that goes bye bye," she said in a recent interview.

Martin said she diagnosed Michael in 2005, although it took the medical profession until 2013 to make it formal. One of the themes of her book – about being a caregiver to Michael for 15 years – is her perception of an inadequate diagnosis system.

She said she knew something was wrong because Michael was being a "jerk," and not behaving like the man she had married. She calls it the eight bad years in the book. She described the behaviour as micromanaging, taking her ideas and adopting them as his own, and being mean to her in private. Once, he told her to shut up in public. There were arguments behind closed doors.

At one point during a stressful family road trip, she pulled the car over, planning to chuck the car keys somewhere and just walk away. It wasn't the first time she thought about leaving.

"When I figured out he had dementia, I told myself, 'okay, you have to decide. Are you going to hang in? If you are, you're going to do a good job. If you're not, bail now so he's got time to make arrangements."

She opted to stay, realizing he was never going to be the husband he had been before. "Kind of like Prime Minister Mark Carney's speech to the World Economic Forum, "the world order has changed. Figure out what you are going to do moving forward, then do it. That is exactly how I felt. I'm not a wife any more, I'm a caregiver. I can do caregiving. I was a mother, a caregiver when he had cancer.

"Once he was assured I was hanging in there for him, to do what was needed to have a last chapter, he settled."

She said Michael was not completely incapacitated. There was "flickering" or times he was there and times he was not. "As a caregiver, your job is to keep them functioning as well as they can for as long as they can." She would grieve when realizing something was gone in him, only to have it come back the next day, asking herself what she should be doing to keep that around. "Then it's gone again. After a while, you think 'to hell with this grieving bit. I'm just surfing'."

Michael's work in those years he retired to his office was to take a song off YouTube and a photo and write a 50-word explanation of what the song meant to him. "He was able to keep care of himself until the week before he died," Martin said.

Hour of his death

Martin doesn't shy away from talking about his death. She said Michael's sister had urged her and Michael's daughter to recite the Catholic Hail Mary prayer on his death bed at home. She said, as protestants, they practiced beforehand to get the cadence right.

As they said the prayer, Michael asked Fay what was happening. She told him she thought it was the hour of his death.

She said Michael, "just curiously walked over the portal" as if pondering, "what's through that door? He let go of my hand and stepped through the portal. It was beautiful." Her goal had been to give him that kind of passing.

Martin did her Bachelor of Fine Arts as she wrote the memoir. She said the book "was to figure out what the hell had happened. The second reason was for other people, "because caregiving for someone with dementia is lonely. I thought if I could do something that would help people who are where I have been feel less lonely, at least say 'I see you. I've been there. I know what you're going through to some extent'."

It's taken about five years to write the memoir. It required going through 46 years of their life together. At one point, the project's structure required myriad Post-its on a wall.

"That kind of review of your life is cathartic," Martin said.

As a social worker by training, she was used to writing case histories. She calls her memoir "just an excruciatingly honest single case history."

That case history will soon be in the hands of readers. The book will be launched at Rails End Gallery March 6, 3-5 p.m.

Martin said she knew the book was ready for consumption after a life-changing trip to the Netherlands with McMaster University and visiting Green Care Homes for people with dementia. Folks in fifth stage dementia were puttering around in their life. She said the homes' philosophies were: nurture independence, find joy and purpose every day, and live until you die.

"Have I accomplished what I was put on earth to accomplish? Have I done my job? If I have joy and purpose every day, I'm good. When there isn't, I'm ready to go."

What the HALIBURTON PODCAST

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THIS WEEK:
Fearrey Unplugged: What Comes Next?

Highlander arts

2026 Municipal Election

Joint Compliance Audit Committee Members

The Corporations of the Township of Algonquin Highlands, the Township of Minden Hills, the Municipality of Dysart et al and the Municipality of Highlands East, are currently seeking interested applicants from professionals who are required to adhere to codes of standards of their profession, and other individuals with in depth knowledge of the campaign financing rules of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* for appointment to a **Joint Compliance Audit Committee.**

The Joint Compliance Audit Committee has full delegation of the authority in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, to address applications requesting an audit of a candidate's election campaign finances. This authority includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Review applications and grant or reject audit requests
- Where an audit is granted, appoint an auditor and review the audit report
- Where indicated, decide whether legal proceedings shall be commenced.

The Joint Compliance Audit Committee will consist of members appointed by each Council. Committee members must have the ability to understand and apply the election campaign finance provisions of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and should be considered impartial with respect to their ability to fulfill their responsibilities. Preference shall be given to candidates that have applicable experience in accounting, law, law enforcement and academics from related fields.

Preferred Qualifications:

(a) Accounting and audit – accountants or auditors with experience in preparing or auditing the financial statements of municipal candidates;
(b) Academic – college or university professors with expertise in political science or local government administration;
(c) Legal; and
(d) Other individuals with knowledge of the campaign financing rules of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996.*

Members of the public interested in serving on this Committee are asked to submit a resume, and covering letter, marked "Confidential" no later than Noon on March 6, 2026 to:

Vicki Bull, Clerk
Township of Minden Hills
Box 359, 7- Milne St., Minden, ON K0M 2K0

For further information, please contact Vicki Bull, Clerk by email at admin@mindenhills.ca

We thank all applicants for applying, but only the selected candidates will be contacted. Personal information and supporting material is collected and used in accordance with the ***Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.***

An afternoon at the opera

Lauren Margison returned to her roots in Haliburton County Feb. 21, bringing her versatile vocals to Highland Hills United Church. The soprano performed a genre-spanning recital of classical, jazz and pop favourites – in collaboration with Melissa Stephens on piano. The afternoon concert was put on by Highlands Opera Studio and the Haliburton County Folk Society as part of February Folk Fest. An alumni of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio and Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, Margison has made her name as one of North America's top operatic acts, recently performing at Opera Ontario, TD Toronto Jazz Festival, the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival and Cincinnati Pops. *(Mike Baker)*

Top: Lauren Margison wowed a packed house at Highland Hills United Church with her vocal range. Bottom left: Melissa Stephens performed alongside Margison, tickling the ivories. Bottom right: Valerie Kuinka of Highlands Opera Studio promised a wonderful show. *Photos by Mike Baker.*

Junior highlanders

The Hal High Red Hawks iced a varsity hockey team for the first time in four years this winter, making great strides in re-establishing the storied program. *Photo submitted.*

Red Hawks soar in on-ice return

By Mike Baker

Jason Morissette has always used more than results to measure a team's success.

Bringing a varsity boys hockey program back to Hal High this winter after four years in the wilderness, Morissette admitted it was a challenge re-building a team from the ground up. The squad, made up of players from all four grades at the high school level, played 10 games in the competitive Kawartha division, winning two, tying one and losing seven.

One of only two single-A schools in the region to ice a hockey team, alongside Campbellford, Hal High was as competitive as it could be, Morissette said.

Having coached eight previous seasons of high school hockey in Haliburton, Morissette said he'd been keen on re-establishing the program for some time.

"We've been looking at this for the past two years to see if it was viable. We looked at starting a junior team initially, but being such a small school we didn't think there was enough interest there," Morissette said. "It can be very hard running teams that require 10 or more athletes – for hockey, you really need 20 players to make this happen. And a ton of support from the community."

The coach credited four or five senior students for rallying enough players to make this happen. Open to all grades, Morissette said that enabled two sets of siblings to play together on an organized team for the first time, while helping players form new connections.

Flanked on the bench by assistants Nick Kulas and Clay Glecoff – both community coaches – trainer Ray Rietvelt, the auto tech teacher at Hal High, and team manager Laura Kulas, Morissette said he had a lot of help this past season. About 15 community sponsors donated funds to help pay for ice rentals and equipment.

"This program does not run this year without the support of the community," Morissette said.

His highlight of the season was attending a multi-school tournament in Peterborough in January. Hosted by St. Peter Catholic Secondary School, the competition has been a staple of the high school hockey circuit for decades.

After struggling on-ice for most of the year, the Red Hawks were the Cinderella story of the tournament, winning four games in round-robin play to qualify for a final tilt with Fenelon Falls Secondary School.

"We ended up losing the final by one goal… but the journey getting there was incredible. The players ran our systems perfectly, guys stepped up to play in unfamiliar positions and situations and we had stellar goaltending… they made giant strides in their game," Morissette said.

In qualifying for the final, the team got to spend a night in a Peterborough hotel, which helped bring everyone closer together.

"I was on that bus years ago when I was a student and it gave me some of my best and favourite memories from when I was a kid," Morissette said.

The team's season concluded Feb. 19 with a 4-2 defeat to Crestwood Secondary School.

"It was disappointing not to make playoffs, but I couldn't be more proud of how these guys adapted and persevered throughout the season," Morissette said. "The win for me is that we're back playing… for 15 of our 21 players, this was their first-ever high school sport. It helps them feel more connected to the school.

"The odds were against this program being revived. A lot of these big team contact sports haven't run at Hal High for some time," he added.

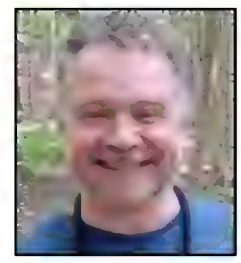
While this season will go down as a success, Morissette said there's no guarantee hockey will return to Hal High next year. It will be dependent on finding at least eight new players to bolster the team and retaining generous sponsors.

That doesn't mean planning stops – coaches will be running skates for prospective junior players – those in Grades 9 to 10 – in early March.

"Fingers crossed we can keep this going," Morissette said.

ADVERTORIAL

Nature is good. Let's have more of it.



By Simon Payn

I love nature and want more of it.

There you go. That's the whole article. Now you can go read about the hockey or do the crossword.

If you live in Haliburton County, maybe you love nature, too. Natural beauty is what attracts most of us here in the first place, even if it's the community that makes us long-term Highlanders.

We justify our inherent love of nature with gloomy data and serious arguments that are meant to persuade us that loving nature is "important". We talk about pollinator decline and carbon sequestration, healthy lakes and climate change.

All these are things worth getting upset about, but none is more important than the fact nature is good and we want more of it.

Want some "research" about this? The Biophilia Hypothesis says humans have an innate love of life and living systems. We have an inborn tendency to seek connection with other living beings. It's just evolution doing what evolution does.

> The more you notice, the more you notice. And the more you notice, the more interesting it is.

Children already know this. It's why, if given the chance, they love watching ants and finding frogs. It's also why we adults tell our friends about the Monarchs on our milkweeds or the Barred Owl in the snowy hemlocks.

I'd go even further. We love nature because we are nature, not separate from it. We want more of what we are.

What more nature means

But what does this mean in practice? What are its implications around our homes and cottages?

Having more nature means accepting nature is messy. Not the weedy chaos of abandonment but the inherent messiness of fallen leaves and "dead" seedheads. It means plants that pop up where you didn't expect them because they've found somewhere they'll be happy.

Nature doesn't follow humanity's cultural rules. So if you want more nature, you have to be OK with that. (You rebel!)

It also means patience. Nature doesn't suddenly appear perfect, like in an HGTV show or a magazine spread. Plants take time to establish, to get to know the place, and to form the relationships that create an ecological community. The result you're wanting happens three years down the road, not on installation day.

So if you want more nature, you have to be willing to wait and appreciate watching the landscape as it establishes.

You have to see differently. A lawn is easy to read: either it's mowed and free of dandelions or it's not. An ecological planting requires a more nuanced seeing. Is that plant dead or naturally dormant? What's shown up that wasn't there before?

There's a feedback loop going on here: the more you notice, the more you notice. And the more you notice, the more interesting it becomes. Now it's not just Monarchs you tell your friends about.

There are choices to be made. Not every plant serves nature equally. The plant that looks pretty to you might be useless to Highlander bees. Native plants, on the other hand, have evolved alongside the rest of nature here. If you want more nature, you want more native plants and fewer exotic ones. You want less lawn and more natural shorelines.

Having more nature means tolerating some discomfort. Your neighbours might not understand. The first year might look rough and patchy. You might not know the names of what you've planted so you've got a learning curve ahead of you.

But the discomfort is only temporary. What you get instead is a landscape that looks, sounds and smells alive. It means something new every week. It means more nature.

Because here's the thing. I love nature and want more of it. I'm willing to bet you do, too.

Simon Payn owns Grounded, which designs, installs and takes care of ecological landscapes in Haliburton County. To bring more nature to your cottage, visit groundedgardens.ca.

Junior highlanders

MY Haliburton HIGHLANDS
Seniors Active Living Centre

Check out this month's SALC events and activities for residents aged 55+

Board game drop-in – various dates in March

March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
Qi Gong for Seniors

March 3, 10, 17, 24
Seniors Stretch Class

March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
Exercise classes with Georgia

March 4
Snowshoeing

March 5, 13, 18, 25
Genealogy for Seniors

March 5, 19
Painting Class

March 5, 19
Functional Senior Fitness

March 5, 6, 11, 12, 27
Needle Felting: Spring Nests

March 6, 13, 20, 27
Seniors Balance and Cardio Fitness Classes

March 10
Mental Health 101 webinar

March 11
Nature Connection

March 11, 25
Balance & Strength Class

March 11, 25
Seniors Exercise Program

March 4, 11, 18, 25
Yarners Social

March 12, 26
Chair Yoga

March 13
Seniors Active Living Fair

March 14
Coffee House

March 17
Senior Wellness Info Session

March 18
Crafternoon Drop-In

March 23
Animal Skull Identification webinar

March 23
Be Ready – 72-Hour Preparedness workshop

March 26
Savouring Stories

March 26
Information Tax Benefits and Credits for Adults 65+ webinar

March 28
Coffee House

March 31
Stress Management webinar

Ontario

Funding for this program has been provided by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

For full details, visit HaliburtonCounty.ca/SALC or pick up a calendar at a municipal office, library or Legion near you!

The Hal High Red Hawks junior girls volleyball team celebrate their Kawartha Championship victory Feb. 12. *Photos submitted.*

Big win for Hal High junior volleyballers

By Mike Baker

The Hal High Red Hawks junior girls volleyball team will be heading to the Central Ontario Secondary Schools Association (COSSA) regional finals full of confidence this week after winning every set across two games to capture Kawartha championship gold Feb. 12.

The young squad, made up of 13 players, have enjoyed a hugely successful season thus far, said coach Allie Paul. After battling for position in the COSSA West conference, competing with much larger schools in Lindsay and Fenelon Falls, the Red Hawks went into playoffs in Campbellford with cautious optimism.

"Our expectations were high, but grounded in the knowledge that anything could happen," Paul said.

The girls breezed to a 3-0 win against Port Hope in the semi-final before going head-to-head with the host school, Campbellford, in the final. Paul said the team rallied against some loud home support, and an injury stoppage in the first set, to record another 3-0 win.

"I am incredibly proud of this team, not only for their undefeated performance at Kawarthas, but for the dedication, growth and sportsmanship they displayed throughout the season," Paul said. "They've set a high standard for future teams and their success is a reflection of their hard work and commitment."

Hal High has a great track record of success in volleyball, with the senior team also winning their Kawartha championships Feb. 12. Paul said the squad is heading into COSSA Feb. 26 in Bay of Quinte hoping to secure another win.

All the girls on the team had prior playing experience, Paul said, giving her and fellow coach, Jami Marren, a "solid foundation to build on." More than 30 girls tried out for the team, Paul said.

"Coming into the season, I approached it with the goal of running a truly competitive program. We focused on conditioning, communication, skill development and fostering a supportive environment," Paul said, noting how she drew from the teachings of her old Hal High volleyball coach, Dan Gimon. "I wanted to channel his influence… he really inspired me to become a better athlete and shaped how I approach coaching.

"My goal was not just to win games, but to help these athletes grow in confidence, teamwork and skill," Paul added.

She said the team has improved with every practice and game, giving them a great chance of competing with the best programs at COSSA.

"These girls never shy away from any drill in practice, no matter how physically demanding, and their willingness to push through challenges really set the tone for the team," Paul said. "Their ability to read the game, set each other up for successful plays and maintain composure under pressure has improved dramatically [as the season progressed], which translated into their results on the court."

With the senior squad also competing at COSSA Feb. 26, Paul said the two teams have an opportunity to raise the bar even higher for girls volleyball at Hal High.

Junior highlanders

Carving up the competition

It was a big weekend for the Haliburton Nordic Team, with seven local elementary-aged athletes traveling to Sudbury to compete in the Ontario Youth Championships. The competition, organized by Cross Country Ski Ontario and hosted at the Walden Ski Club, featured over 200 skiers from across the province. Haliburton had representatives in the U14, U12 and U10 categories, with Thomas Ritchie (U10) recording the best finish, capturing bronze in the skate race and silver in the classic race. Fellow County-based athletes Adam Rieger, Ben Rieger, Jacob Waito and Jack Ward also posted top 10 finishes, with Isaac Fahrun and Liam Ward putting in strong performances. The youth team is run by the Haliburton Highlands Nordic Trails Association and serves as a development club for students in Grades 4 to 8. *(Mike Baker)*

Above: The Haliburton Nordic Team: back row, Jason Ward and Ian Ritchie; middle, Jack Ward, Isaac Fahrun and Liam Ward; front, Thomas Ritchie, Adam Rieger, Ben Rieger and Jacob Waito. *Photos submitted.*

NOTICE

2025 SPRING LOAD RESTRICTIONS

Under the Highway Traffic Act and County By-Law #2216, the County of Haliburton enforces reduced load restrictions on trucks to protect the County roadways during spring thaw, when road damage is most likely to occur.

Restriction on permits issued under the Highway Traffic Act and County By-Law #2216:

As outlined in the Highway Traffic Act and County of Haliburton By-Law #2216, reduced loading may be in effect in the County of Haliburton as early as 12:01 a.m. on March 1, 2025.

The actual date of reduced load limit enforcement will be in effect when and where signs are posted. All annual and project permits for moving of heavy vehicle loads, objects or structures, in excess of limits set out in the Act and the By-Law, unless otherwise specified, are not valid on any County Roads during the Reduced Loads Period.

Reduced load limits will be in effect where and when signs are posted.

WHEN SIGNS ARE POSTED, THE FOLLOWING ROADS WILL HAVE A REDUCED LOAD LIMIT FOR THEIR ENTIRE LENGTH:

County Roads 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 39, 48, 507 & 648-with the exception from CR 10 west to HWY 118.

On and after **March 1st**, check the County of Haliburton website www.haliburtoncounty.ca under "Notices" to see when reduced load limits are in effect and when they are lifted.

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2026 Municipal Election

Are you interested in being a Member of Council or School Board Trustee?

The Term of Council is 4 years!

Requirements under the ***Municipal Election Act***:

- **Nomination Period:**
  - **May 1, 2026 to August 20, 2026** (regular business hours)
  - **August 21, 2026** (9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.)
- **Candidates must submit signatures of 25 eligible voters, in their municipality, to support their nomination.** (not applicable for School Board Trustee(s))
  For more information, please visit your local municipality's website or contact the Clerks Department.

Township of Algonquin Highlands 1123 North Shore Road Algonquin Highlands, ON K0M 1S0 Tel: 705-489-2379 ahelection2026@algonquinhighlands.ca www.algonquinhighlands.ca Dawn Newhook, Municipal Clerk	**Municipality of Highlands East** 2249 Loop Road P.O. Box 295 Wilberforce, ON K0L 3C0 Tel: 705-448-2981 www.highlandseast.ca Robyn Rogers, Municipal Clerk
Municipality of Dysart et al 135 Maple Avenue P.O. Box 389 Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0 Tel: 705-457-1740 www.dysartetal.ca Amanda Duncombe-Lee, Municipal Elections Coordinator	**Township of Minden Hills** 7 Milne St P.O. Box 359 Minden, ON K0M 2K0 Tel: 705-286-1260 Toll Free: 1-844-277-1260 Email: elections@mindenhills.ca www.mindenhills.ca Vicki Bull, Municipal Clerk

The Huskies

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Jack Cook celebrates with teammates after scoring the Huskies second goal against Lindsay. *Photos by Mike Baker.*

Huskies ready for wars to end regular season

By Mike Baker

The Haliburton County Huskies still have a chance to secure home ice advantage for the opening round of playoffs, but they'll likely need to beat two of the Ontario Junior Hockey League's top teams to do so.

Heading into the final weekend of the regular season, the blue and white are preparing for a road tilt with the Collingwood Blues, the second-place team in the West Division, on Feb. 27 before hosting the Stouffville Spirit, second in the East, in Minden Feb. 28.

Having had a full week to prepare for the games, Huskies alternate captain Isaac Larmand said the team will be ready to go come Friday.

"We just want to bring energy from this week's practices and come out flying for the weekend. If we do our thing and focus on what's got us to this point, there's no reason we can't go out and win," Larmand said. "We've shown before that we can beat all the top teams this season."

This will be the Huskies first and only match-up against a Collingwood team that has lost only four times in their home arena this season. The Huskies are 2-1 against Stouffville, winning 3-2 at home Jan. 3 and splitting games on the road – losing 3-2 Jan. 8 before redeeming themselves 4-1 on Feb. 12.

Larmand says it was nice for the team to have a few days to mentally reset after a tough weekend, where they gave up a 2-0 lead to lose 4-3 in overtime to the Lindsay Muskies Feb. 20 before falling 4-2 to the Markham Royals Feb. 21 in Minden.

The blue and white got off to a great start in what is likely the final 'Battle of Hwy. 35' of the season, with forward Chase Del Colombo pouncing on a Muskies misplay 3:52 into the first to pot his 16th goal of the season shorthanded. Defenceman Jack Cook made it 2-0 at 17:55, ripping a shot top shelf from the point on the power play after good work from Brody Coe and Ryan Gosse.

The Huskies took their foot off the gas after a dominant first period display and the Muskies, chasing a first playoff berth since the 2012-13 season, took full advantage – Ajay Rai helping himself to a hat-trick with two goals in the second and one early in the third to swing the game.

Coe tied things up at three late in the third, but the Muskies weren't to be denied – potting the game-winner two-and-a-half minutes into the extra frame.

Untimely penalties cost the Huskies dearly in their loss to Markham – the ninth-place team chasing Lindsay for the East Division's final playoff spot.

Ryan Fairbairn got the home side off to a flying start 72 seconds in, scoring from Gosse and Del Colombo, but two Chance Adams goals on the man advantage brought the Royals back into the game. Fairbairn added a second late in the second, from Carson Durnin and Kieran Raynor, but Markham scored twice in the third to seal the victory.

"Neither game went the way we wanted them to. Playing against the eighth and ninth seed in our division… those are games where we need to be better and have the will to win," Larmand said. "The penalties for sure didn't help us this weekend… but adversity is not always a bad thing. Learning from it and taking the positives can be a good thing and help us in the future."

Newmarket awaits

The Huskies know who they'll be facing in the opening round - a familiar foe in the Newmarket Hurricanes.

The two teams have been neck-and-neck in the standings for much of the year, though the blue and white hold the better head-to-head record, going 3-1 in the regular season.

Larmand said he and his teammates aren't yet looking beyond this weekend's games but are aware of the challenge that lies ahead.

"I think everyone has looked at the standings. Newmarket will know their record against us coming into playoffs. People say it might not mean anything, but it'll be in the back of their mind," Larmand said.

"Our goal now is to end the season on as big of a high as possible. We want to go into the playoffs with a bit of a hot streak and be a tone-setter for the league. Beating two top teams in Collingwood and Stouffville would be a great way to do that. That can only help to get everyone in the dressing room pumped up for, hopefully, another lengthy post-season run."

Home of the Highland Storm

Jackson Sperrino and Joseph Pursuczek celebrate the Storm's second goal. *Photos by Mike Baker.*

Muskies keep Storm at bay

The Pepper Mill Steak and Pasta House U15 Highland Storm Yellow travelled to Lindsay to play Lindsay Muskies Teal for their second game of the playoffs Feb. 20.

The Storm was riding high after a dramatic comeback win in their first playoff game. The team came out flying with sustained offensive zone possession and a few rush chances by Chris Fillier.

Fillier's speed and confidence have been improving all season and it showed in this game. The offensive spark plug of the team, Jackson Sperrino, broke through Lindsay's defence and drew double coverage, leaving Linus Gervais open for a one-timer from the bottom of the right circle giving the Storm a 1-0 lead early in the first.

Sperrino was not finished as minutes later he broke in all alone and scored on a well-placed shot to the top left corner of the net.

The Storm carried momentum into the second period. Strong forechecking by Claire Hamilton, Addison Haaijema, Brayden Collins and Grayson Miscio led to multiple turnovers and shots on goal.

Easy defensive zone exits by Cameron Bawks and Lucas Sinclair allowed for Joseph Porzuczek to showcase his speed and stickhandling through the neutral zone. Jacob Manning and Grayson Thomas played hard defensively in front of our net, blocking out bodies and clearing rebounds.

The Storm had the game in hand until a couple of penalties disrupted their flow. Mismatched lines and defensive pairings started showing cracks as Lindsay applied pressure by getting pucks on net and hunting for rebounds. They finally broke through on a rebound after a terrific pad save by Marshall Heasman. This boosted Lindsay's confidence as they continued to attack the front of the Storm's net and were rewarded with the tying goal with four minutes to go in the second period.

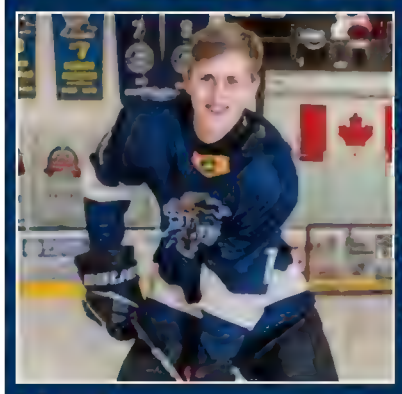
The first shift of the third was sluggish for the Storm. Missed clearing attempts and poor defensive coverage led to Lindsay taking the lead 45 seconds into the period.

The Storm tried hard to tie it, including a six-on-four opportunity in the final minute, but Lindsay's goalie made timely saves and kept the Storm at bay. The team has little time to dwell on this loss as the playoff schedule is busy. *(Submitted)*

STARS of the WEEK

JACKSON SPERRINO

Led the league in scoring this season. He always tries his hardest to live up to his 'showtime' nickname.



LUCAS SINCLAIR

Top scoring defencemen in the league this season. Uses his speed to shut down rush chances

CHRIS FILLIER

Constant steady improvement has been Chris' goal this season. Works hard every shift.

Photos by Tim Tofflemire

SCORE BOARD

Feb. 17
U15 Minden Pharmasave vs U15 The Pepper Mill Steak & Pasta House 4-3 W for Pepper Mill
Feb. 18
U11 REP Tom Prentice & Sons vs Sturgeon 1-1 T
U15 Rep Cheryl Smith RE/MAX vs Newcastle 6-2 W
Feb. 19
U13 REP CURRY CHEVROLET vs Brock 8-5 W
U11 Rep Tom Prentice & Sons vs Lindsay 5-2 L
U18 A&W Haliburton vs Lindsay 5-3 L
Feb. 20
U13 Casey's Water Well & Geothermal vs Brock 3-0 L
U15 The Pepper Mill Steak & Pasta House vs Lindsay 3-2 L
Feb. 21
U9 Cottage Country Building Supplies vs Millbrook 10-2 W
U11 Rep Tom Prentice & Sons vs Lindsay 3-1 L
U13 Casey's Water Well & Geothermal vs Millbrook 5-1 L
U13 Rep Curry Chevrolet vs Ennismore 4-3 L
U15 The Pepper Mill Steak & Pasta House vs Durham 3-3 T
Feb. 22
U13 Casey's Water Well & Geothermal vs Durham 2-2 T
U18 REP Haliburton Timber Mart vs Newcastle 5-4 L
U15 Rep Cheryl Smith RE/MAX vs Millbrook 6-0 W
U15 The Pepper Mill Steak & Pasta House vs Durham 3-2 L

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What's on

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION EVENTS

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 129 Haliburton

Mondays: Office open 9 a.m. to noon, clubroom closed. Bridge at 1 p.m., youth dart league (ages 10-18) 6:20 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Tuesdays: Cadets after school starts at 5 p.m., meeting starts at 6 p.m. Games and cards night starting at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome. Darts league 7 p.m. start.
Wednesdays: Bid euchre 1 p.m. start, Remembrance Hall. Bingo will resume in the spring.
Thursdays: General meeting third Thursday of the month, March to December; ladies auxiliary meeting last Thursday of the month, February to November.
Fridays: Meat draw, five draws, five prize each draw, first draw at 4:30 p.m., last draw at 6:30 p.m., tickets are $2 per draw; fun darts at 4:30 p.m. onwards; 50/50 draw at 5 p.m., tickets are $1 and available in the clubroom.
Saturdays: Open only for special events
Office hours: Monday 3 to 6 p.m., Tuesday 5 to 9 p.m., Wednesday/Thursday 3 to 6 p.m., Friday 3 to 7 p.m., Saturday/Sunday closed
Clubroom hours: Monday 3-6 p.m., Tues 5-9 p.m., Wed/Thurs 3-6 p.m., Fri 3-7 p.m., Saturday/Sunday closed.

Royal Canadian Legion - Mabel D. Brannigan Branch 636 Minden

Lunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. **Monday to Thursday** with regular menu and daily special including Liver Lovers' **Tuesday**.
Friday Fish & Chips & Wings. Lunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and dinner 4-7 p.m.
Saturday all day breakfast 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with meat draws at 11 a.m.
Call ahead any day for take-out: 705-286-4541
Weekly activities:
Karaoke: call for dates
Monday: Rug Hookers every second week.
Monday: Euchre 1-3 p.m.
Thursday: Cribbage 1-3 p.m., Darts 7-9 p.m. and euchre 7-9 p.m.

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 624 Wilberforce

Monday: open 7 to 10 p.m.
Tuesday: closed, special events only.
Wednesday: open 2 to 10 p.m.
Thursday: open 2 to 10 p.m. HHHS social rec Feb. 26 at 10 a.m.
Friday: open 2 to 11 p.m. Feb. 27 is community care 55+ lunch at noon, cost is $17 per person. Also, wings and jam session from 5 to 8 p.m. Cost is $15 per pound.
Saturday: open 2 to 9 p.m. Meat draw 28 at 3 p.m. Trivia Feb. 28 at 7 p.m., $5 per player.
Sunday: closed, special events only.

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 441 Kinmount

Mondays: Bid euchre at 1 p.m.
Tuesdays: Closed
Wednesdays: Mixed darts at 7:30 p.m.
Thursdays: Closed
Fridays: Clubroom opens at 4 p.m. Bingo, doors open at 5 p.m. with play beginning at 6:45 p.m. Supper specials starting at 5 p.m.
Saturdays: Clubroom opens at 3 p.m. Meat draw at 5:30 p.m.
Third Thursday of the month is the executive meeting at 7 p.m. and general meeting at 7:30 p.m. Third Sunday of the month is the ladies auxiliary meeting.

EVENTS

Feb. 26, 6:30 to 8 p.m. Enjoy a 'musical sound bath' with Marci Mandel at Rails End Gallery in Haliburton. Enjoy sounds from an array of instruments, including drums, wooden flute, chimes, voice and exotic quartzophone. Bring a pad or yoga mat to lay on, blanket, pillow, eye mask, journal and water bottle. Maximum of 10 participants – pay what you can. Register at info@railsendgallery.com.

Feb. 26, 11 a.m. to noon. Stop by the Highland Grove library for its monthly Savouring Stories event. Each month, attendees explore the fascinating world of food through stories, history, shared experiences and cooking (every second month). No registration required.

Feb. 26, Pasta for playground fundraiser at Haliburton Highlands Secondary School cafeteria. First seating 4:30-6 p.m., and second seating 6-7:30 p.m. All supporters of the Haliburton elementary schools are welcome. The playground is for SBES and JDH. Bring your family, friends and neighbour. Tickets: Adult: $15; kids: $10; add meatballs: $5. Get tickets at haliburtonschoolstore.com

Feb. 28, 9 a.m. Ice racing at the Minden Fairgrounds. Admission is free for spectators – come out and watch as dozens of drivers jostle for position on the slick track. Racing also takes place March 1 with an 11 a.m. start time. This is the final week of the ice racing season.

Feb. 28, 4:30 p.m. The 44th annual West Guilford Snow Shuffle returns, with a poker run among nature and dinner and dance at the West Guilford Community Centre. Limited tickets available. Tickets for the full event are $70, available at West G Auto and West Guilford Shopping Centre. Registration is from 9 a.m. to noon, lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and cards drawn by 4:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Feb. 28, 7 p.m. Celebrate the release of Kate Hall's latest single with an intimate pop-up performance alongside Amy Jean at Redmans Records in Haliburton. This in-store show at 173a Highland St. is all about great songs, close listening and local music magic. All are welcome.

March 3, 1 p.m. Do you love to garden? Join the Minden & District Horticultural Society at the Minden Community Centre to learn how to create a micromeadow. Led by guest speaker Baz Conlin. Followed by the monthly society meeting. New members welcome.

March 6, 1:30 p.m. Celebrating World Day of Prayer at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Minden (7 Bobcaygeon Rd.) with an ecumenical service featuring Nigeria. Refreshments and fellowship to come. All are welcome.

March 8, 2 p.m. Razzamataz Kids' Shows returns with The Old Man and the River, presented by Wee Festival. This performance features puppetry without words, performed alongside an enchanting musical score. Suitable for children of all ages and sensibilities. For tickets, visit www.razzamataz.ca.

March 8, 2 p.m. Gail Stelter is hosting a book launch for her new published story *21 Smithfield Drive* at Haliburton United Church. Refreshments will be provided. RSVP by contacting Gail at 705-455-2772.

Have a non-profit event you want advertised? email mike@thehighlander.ca

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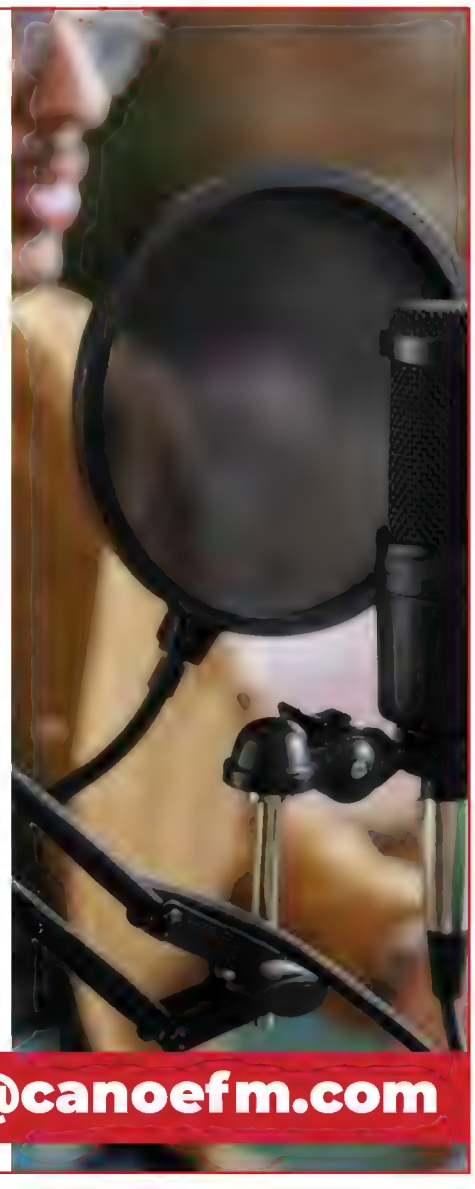

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Highlander sports

Ready, set, race

It was the penultimate weekend of ice racing at the Minden Fairgrounds Feb. 21-22, with dozens of racers participating in the Canadian Automobile Sport Clubs (CASC) sanctioned events. Last weekend's action was sponsored by the Peterborough Motor Sports Club, with next weekend's final round, sponsored by the Twin Lakes Motor Club, taking place Feb. 28 and March 1. *(Mike Baker)*

Above: Luke Bouwmeester, in number 48, leads the chasing pack in Class 2 rubber wheel action. Inset: Louis Cabardos waves the checkered flag, indicating the end of the race. Right: And they're off – the 14 vehicles racing in the Class 2 rubber wheel category fly down the track. *Photos by Mike Baker.*

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SNOW REMOVAL

Section 181 of the Ontario Highway Traffic Act states: No person shall deposit snow or ice on a roadway without permission in writing so to do from the Ministry or the road authority responsible for the maintenance of the road. R.S.O. 1990, c. H.8, s. 181.

LET'S SORT! – BLUE BOX RECYCLING TIPS

- Chip bags, snack wrappers, and cereal liner bags are recycled with your papers/fibres recycling
- Styrofoam packaging from products are recycled with your containers recycling
- Paper coffee cups are recycled with your containers recycling
- Flexible plastics including plastic bags and bubble wrap are recycled with your papers/fibres recycling
- Toothpaste tubes, deodorant, and hand cream tubes are recycled with your containers recycling

STRATEGIC PLAN – PRIORITIZATION ONLINE SURVEY

Your voice matters in Minden Hills and we need your input. This is your opportunity to share what matters to you as well as helping to guide community priorities for the years to come.

The online survey will be available for input until Friday, February 27, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. Visit our website to link to the survey at www.mindenhills.ca.

Questions? Please email admin@mindenhills.ca or call 705-286-1260 ext. 527.

COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted in-person (Council Chambers, 7 Milne St., Minden) and with electronic participation. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

- February 26 – Regular Council Meeting
- March 12 – Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link.

MINDEN HILLS CULTURAL CENTRE

- Join us for the 3rd annual Archie Stouffer Student Art Exhibition on display until March 21 in the Agnes Jamieson Gallery. The student artist reception and awards ceremony will be held on Saturday, February 28 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. All are welcome. Admission is by donation.
- A selection of artwork from the Agnes Jamieson Gallery's permanent collection, as well as new acquisitions, is now on display. The Gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. All are welcome. Admission is by donation.
- Join us on Friday, February 27 for PA Day activities. Seasonal crafts, exhibits, and interactive experiences will be offered at Nature's Place from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. with admission by donation. In the afternoon, enjoy a free movie screening of Disney's Coco (2007) in the Welch Room starting at 1:00 p.m.

For information on all the programs and exhibits offered at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre: culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca or call 705-286-3763.

S.G. NESBITT MEMORIAL ARENA

- Stop by the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena on Friday for our line-up of PA Day activities for the whole family.
- March Break registration is open! Sign your child(ren) up for a fun filled week at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena.

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FOR RENT

FOR RENT - Bright, clean hall available for rent, seating for up to 80 people. Facility is fully accessible. Ample parking. Conveniently located within 3 kilometers of the Haliburton Hospital. Full day and ½ day rentals available. Email halihhoa@gmail.com or call 705-457-9664

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FOR RENT - One bedroom upper level apartment, screened porch, satellite TV, walking distance to downtown, schools & hospital. No pets, non-smoker, $1,500.00 per month includes heat, hydro, a/c and satellite TV. Call 705-455-9878

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WORK WANTED HALIBURTON MAN looking for work, Mason by trade, but familiar with all aspects of construction, reno's, demo, bush work, etc. Also, Chimney or Fireplace repair, Foundation repair, brick, block, stone, concrete & tile. Call Shannon at 306-317-7073

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HELP WANTED - Servers, Line Cooks, Housekeepers, Front Desk/Guest Services. Bartenders. Email resume to: info@sirsamsinn.com

NOTICE

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS - Sundays - 10:30 am at St. Anthony's, 27 Victoria Street Haliburton. Wednesdays - 7:00 PM at Highland Hills United Church, 21 Newcastle St. in Minden - rear door.

NOTICE

AL ANON- WE CARE, are you troubled by someone's drinking? Meetings: Thursdays 7 p.m., St. Anthony's 27 Victoria Street, Haliburton, and Mondays 7 p.m. at Highland Hills United Church, 21 Newcastle, Rear Entrance, Minden. 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666)

NOTICE

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS Admission is free and the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. This meeting is for addicts only. Meeting in Haliburton that meets every Thursday from 7:30-8:30 p.m. at 83 Maple Ave. Unit 7A in Haliburton Halco Plaza, behind Castle Antiques.

ANNIVERSARY

OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Darlene McGarry

With deep love and gratitude for a life well lived, the family of Darlene Carol McGarry announces her passing into the presence of the Lord on Saturday, February 21, 2026, in her 77th year.

Beloved Wife of John "Tim" Payment. Loving Mother of Noel Payment, Jamie Payment, Robert McGarry, and Melinda LeBlanc. Darlene will be dearly missed by her grandchildren, Sydney, Rhys, Liam, Vivienne, Max, and Jordan. Also lovingly remembered by her Daughters-in-law, Melissa Daniels, Danielle McGarry, Carmen Jade Lee, and Son-in-law Andre LeBlanc. Darlene was predeceased by her mother, Vivian MacCumber, and her sister, Linda MacCumber.

Darlene was family-oriented. She took great joy in being a wife and mother and lived for her children and Grandchildren. Darlene enjoyed nature, the great outdoors, and all of God's creations. Darlene's warmth, love for life, and ability to bring joy to those around her will never be forgotten. She will be fondly remembered by all who had the privilege to know her.

Private Funeral Arrangements

Funeral arrangements are private. As per Darlene's wishes, cremation has taken place. As an expression of sympathy, donations to a charity of your choice would be appreciated by the family. Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the **HALIBURTON COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME**, 13523 Hwy. #118 Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0 (705) 457-9209.

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Grounded is looking for a few people to join its field team this season—casual, on-call work from May through October doing hands-on ecological landscaping.

This suits people who want flexible outdoor work without the commitment of a full-time job, or anyone who just wants to spend time outside doing something physical and useful. We're also open to bringing on a student for more regular hours over the summer.

Pay starts at $22 per hour. If this sounds like you—or someone you know—details are at groundedgardens.ca/hiring.

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GARDENING FOR LIFE

The Corporation of the County of Haliburton Requires a
Grants & Procurements Coordinator
(18-month contract)

The County of Haliburton is currently accepting applications for a Grants & Procurements Coordinator. This new, vacant position is currently offered as a fixed term 18-month contract.

Reporting to the Deputy Treasurer, this position secures external funding opportunities and ensures compliant and transparent procurement processes. This dual-function role prioritizes responsibilities associated with identifying, securing, and administering grants The successful candidate will have post-secondary education and 4-5 years of experience in a relevant field.

This position includes participation in the OMERS defined benefit pension program and employer paid extended health benefits. The hourly wage range is $36.32 - $42.49.

Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for a more detailed posting and job description.

Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than **Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 4:30pm**.

We thank all who apply for this position; however only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The County of Haliburton is an equal opportunity employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.

In accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act,* the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.

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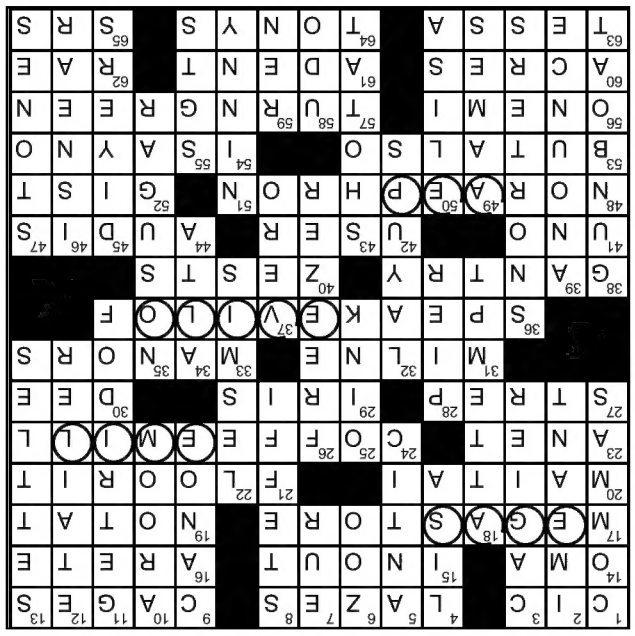

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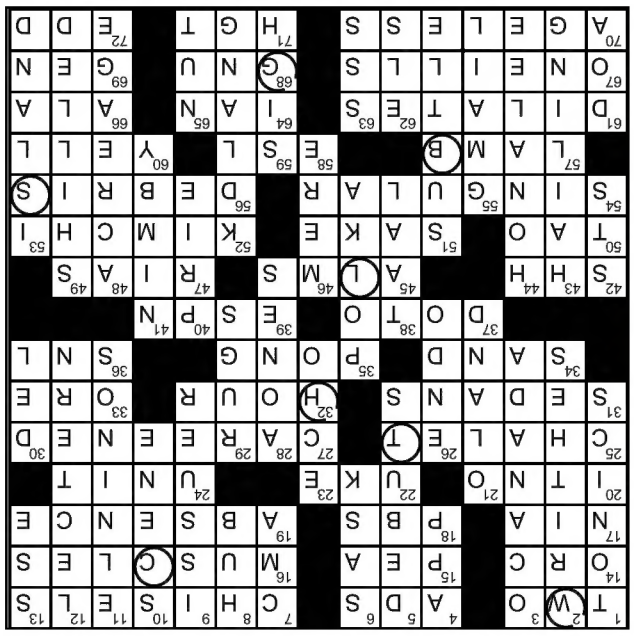

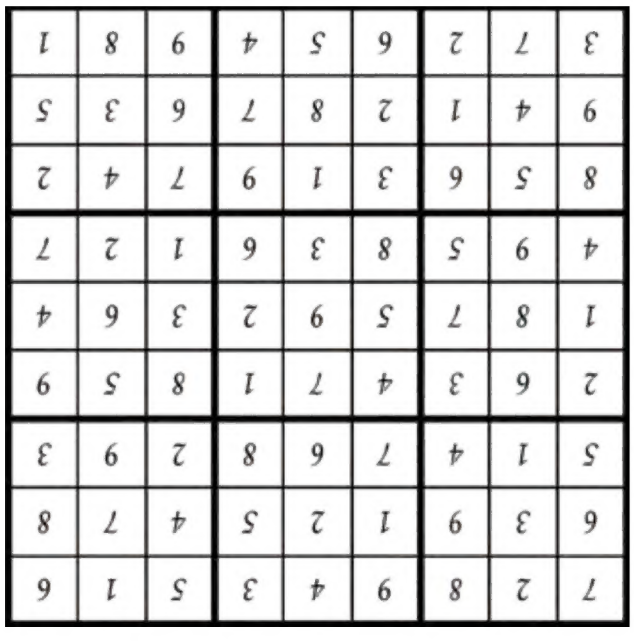

OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Bradley "Brad" Laurence Dale McKnight

Passed away peacefully at the Haliburton Hospital on Friday, February 20, 2026 with his loving family by his side, at the age of 81.

Devoted husband of Shirley (nee Ruttle) for almost 60 years. Dear father of Chantelle Moffatt (Ken Elshaw). Loving grandfather of Joshua and Paige Moffat. Survived by his sister Vera Kernohan (the late John), sister-in-law Linda Kellett and predeceased by sisters Ruth Stamp (Morris), Lois Nesbitt (Chesel) and by brothers Lyle McKnight and Gary McKnight (Darlene). Lovingly remembered by many nieces, nephews, family and friends.

Many describe Bradley as larger than life. He approached life with laughter and a smile and always having a kind word to say. His friends and family will remember him fondly as a fierce euchre player who wouldn't let anyone get away with playing the wrong card. He loved to dance and in the early years of their marriage, he and wife Shirley would be out dancing the night away every weekend. When called upon, Bradley would always lend a hand or a bottle to a task or party. He was an avid reader and was the most loyal friend anyone could have.

His family would like to thank all the staff at Haliburton Hospital for the excellent care and support they provided in Bradley's last days.

In keeping with Brad's wishes, there will be no funeral and cremation has taken place. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date and will be announced.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

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In Loving Memory of

Beryl Beatrice Murison

(formerly Rasmus, nee Raymond)

December 15,1943 -February 19, 2026

It is with both heavy hearts and joy for a life well-lived that we announce Beryl's passing on February 19,2026 at Haliburton Hospital.

Beryl was preceded in death by her mother Iris (Neville) and father, Lincoln, husband Richard, and sons Keith and Kurt. Beryl is survived by her husband Brian, her son Kevin (Lynda), daughter-in-law Cara, grandchildren Laurel (Pieter), Kyle (Caitlin), Anna, Willow, Dylan, nephew Roderick (Keiko), and grand-niece Hannah, also by Brian's children Scott, Jennifer (Justin), grandchildren Emma, Ella and nephew Rick (Val) Remembered by family and friends in South Africa, Australia, Scarborough, Toronto, and Haliburton.

Born and raised in Cape Town, South Africa, Beryl immigrated to Scarborough, Ontario with Richard in February 1968. In her Scarborough years, working as hairstylist, mom to three boys, and close to her mother who followed her to Scarborough, Beryl's life was filled with activity, conversation, laughter and love. She ensured the family's home had a revolving front door allowing friends, neighbors and family in for babysitting, haircuts, lunches, laundry, sports practice and holiday dinners. Everyone was welcomed. Beryl camped and cottaged on Lake Kashagawigamog with family and friends from the mid-1970s until retiring to Haliburton in 1996. In Haliburton, Beryl was an active community member, avid golfer and curler and enthusiastic volunteer with the Haliburton Curling Club. Beryl also volunteered at Extendicare-Haliburton where her mother resided in her final years and at the Haliburton Hospital Auxiliary gift shop.

Beryl and Brian married in 2015 and together they continued to enjoy golfing, curling, and vacationing with friends in Hilton Head and the Dominican Republic during Haliburton winters. Beryl was loved dearly and is greatly missed.

As per Beryl's wishes, cremation has taken place and no services will be held.

A donation in her memory to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation or a charity of your choice would be appreciated and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

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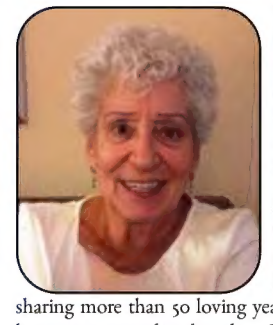
In Loving Memory of

Rita Mary Lockhart

(nee Geary)



With gratitude for her long and faith-filled life, we announce the passing of our beloved mother, Rita Mary Lockhart (née Geary), in her 92nd year She was deeply blessed by the loving example of her parents, George and Georgette (Beausoleil).

Born in Peterborough in 1934, Rita was the third of nine sisters. She built a beautiful life alongside her devoted husband, Glen (predeceased 2004), sharing more than 50 loving years together in Irondale, Ontario. Their home was rooted in her deep Roman Catholic faith and her love for family.

Rita was the proud and dearly loved mother of six children. Three who have predeceased her, and three who remain to carry on her memory. She was a cherished grandmother to eleven and a great-grandmother to seven, each of whom brought her immense joy. Her family was her greatest treasure. She celebrated every milestone, shared her wisdom openly, and loved unconditionally. She also leaves behind two sisters and brothers-in-law, Georgette (Richard) and Denise (Robert), along with extended family and dear friends.

Affectionately known as "Bulldog Drummond" she was admired for her resilience, sharp spirit, and determination. Through every challenge, she faced life with courage, humour, and grace. The family extends heartfelt gratitude to the staff of Victoria Manor for their exceptional care, compassion, and kindness.

Her legacy is one of love, a love that lives on through her family and will continue for generations. She will be deeply missed and forever cherished.

A Memorial Mass will be held at the St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Kinmount on Saturday, March 14, 2026 at 11:00 am. Cremation has taken place.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations to the Catholic Women's League of Canada at St. Patrick's Parish or to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

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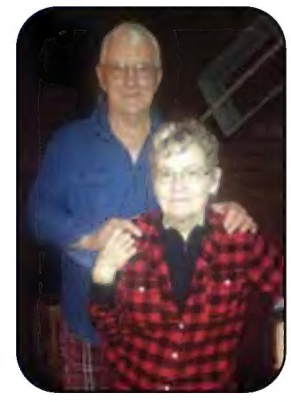
In Loving Memory of

Sharon Stoughton-Craig



It is with profound sadness the family announces the peaceful passing of Sharon Stoughton-Craig at the young age of 82, of Gooderham, Ontario.

Beloved wife of Ken Craig and daughter of the late Clifford and Myria Stoughton, sister of Wayne, Joan and Boyd. Mother of son Michael Hunter (deceased) and daughter Shelly Hunter. Sharon will be greatly missed by her nieces, nephews, grandchildren, great grandchildren and the community at large.

As per Sharon's request, there will be no Memorial Service or Celebration of Life. Cremation has taken place.

In lieu of flowers, for those who wish to donate in Sharon's memory, donations can be made to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) or to Myositis Canada (Inclusive Body Myositis) and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

A special thanks to Shannon Hunter for her unwavering love and support. The family also wishes to thank all the staff at Haliburton Highlands Health Services for their quality care and dedication.

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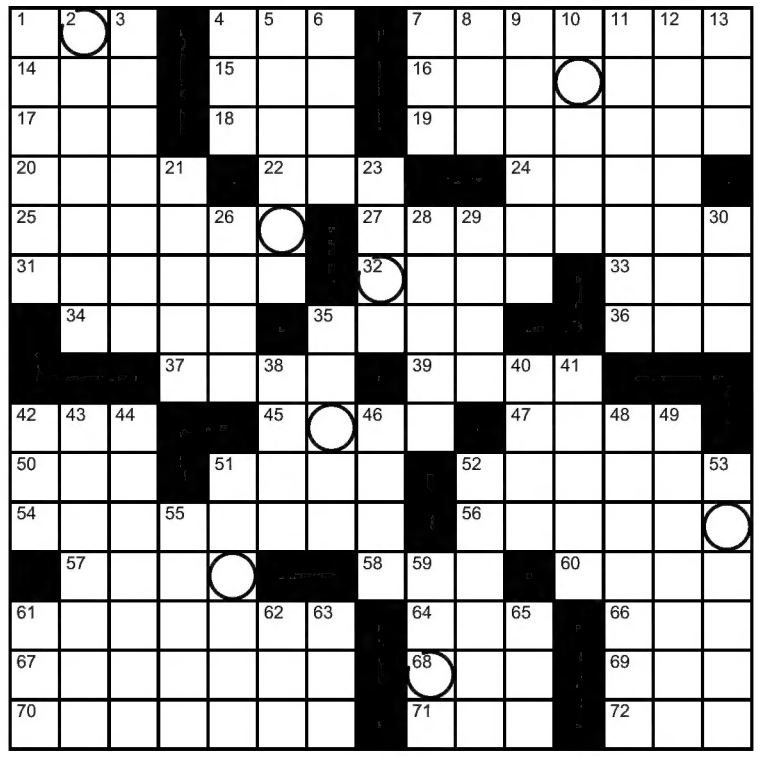

Across

1 Peace sign finger count
4 X revenue source
7 Wood carving tools
14 Tolkien monster
15 Snap, snow or split veggie
16 Popeye's pride
17 Winnipeg-born Vardalos
18 "Masterpiece Theatre" airer
19 Effect of an RSVP "no"
20 "Pay ___ mind"
22 Lei wearer's instrument, for short
24 A single condo
25 Après-ski A-frame
27 Lurched dangerously
31 Chair or car types
32 Therapy session length, often
33 Tramcar load
34 Seaside castle material
35 Stench
36 "Weekend Update" show, for short
37 "What did I ___ deserve this?"
39 "Baseball Tonight" channel
42 "Silence!", and a hint to solving the circled letters
45 Aid for the poor
47 Coastal inlets
50 "The Way," to Confucius
51 Beverage in an o-choko
52 Korean gut-health food
54 Plural counterpart
56 Earthquake rubble, say
57 Nativity scene animal
58 Subj. taught by Anglos abroad, maybe
60 Billy Idol's "Rebel ___"
61 Widens, as a pupil
64 Anchor Hanomansing
66 Fish ___ meunière
67 Actor Ed and playwright Eugene
68 Bearded grass grazer
69 X, Y and Z lead-in
70 Defying the passage of time
71 Raptor's stat: Abbr.
72 "77 Sunset Strip" actor Byrnes

Down

1 G&T "T"s
2 Twists in pain
3 July 1 song
4 Kindle or Tinder
5 First-time shows
6 Its cap. is Regina
7 Willie Nelson's honour: Abbr.
8 Car part with a cap
9 Passport provider, e.g
10 Embarrassing to-do
11 "Little boys," in a forecast
12 Stand for a speaker
13 Vancouver-Seattle dir.
21 Warner who played Chan
23 ___ chamber
26 Opposite of -ecto
28 Top-tier group
29 Throw things on the floor?
30 Costa ___ Sol, Spain
35 Accordion music dance
38 Dutch dialect of South Africa
40 ___ dieu (praying bench)
41 "Don't build it here" acronym
42 Paul, John and George, but not Ringo: Abbr.
43 Falling down hard?
44 Magic dragon's land
46 Barely worth mentioning
48 Farming plot
49 Promoted deceptively
51 Not blatant
52 Singer with a lowercase-letter name
53 "Survivor" setting
55 Yahoo alternative
59 Sound of relief
61 ___ double take
62 Golf champ Ernie
63 Tea kettle sound
65 Kook

Looking for ladies that played soft-ball multiple years from 1960-89!

The Haliburton County Ladies Softball League are being honoured in the Haliburton County Hall of Fame!

Please contact me if you played and can attend. **Induction is 2pm, May 23rd.**
Also looking for action shots, please send to: **cheryl_greg4@hotmail.com**

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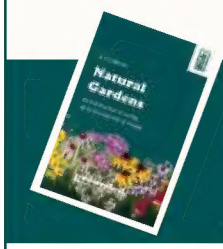

For a free guide to natural gardens in Haliburton County, visit groundedgardens.ca.

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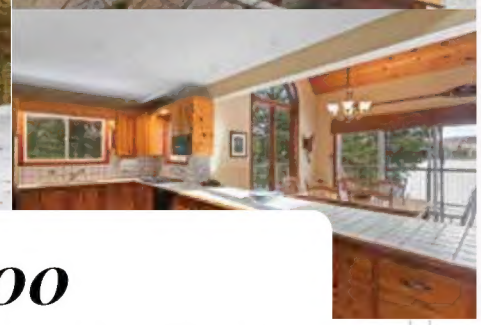

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Sat. March 14 | 3–5 PM
and
Sat. March 21 | 3-5 PM

Don't miss the opportunity to tour this beautiful property

Basshaunt Lake $920,000

Whether you're seeking a serene escape, an active outdoor lifestyle, or quality time with family and friends, this exceptional property blends privacy, recreation, and the quiet beauty of nature into the perfect year-round retreat. Discover this stunning waterfront home overlooking the lake, set on a generous private lot. Scenic walking trails begin right at your doorstep, with easy four-season access, near Sir Sam's Ski / Ride.

2+1 | 1.06 ACRES

2

Check it out on REALTOR.ca

Little Boshkung
$675,000
MLS#X12694894
2 | 4

Highway 35
$499,900
MLS X12604142
2 | 4

Gelert Road
$315,000
MLS X12267121
1 | 2

EVERY SALE HAS A STORY

"We recently sold our cottage and had an outstanding experience with Baumgartner Realty Group. Their **professionalism**, **clear communication**, recommendations, follow up and market expertise made the entire process smooth and stress-free. From listing to pre-closing, every detail was handled with **care and efficiency**. We couldn't be more pleased with the results and highly recommend the Baumgartner Realty Group to anyone looking to buy or sell property."

-G Simpson, Google Review

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Not intended to solicit buyers or sellers currently under contract.

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SCAN TO VIEW LISTINGS